

**Interagency Coordinating Group
Meeting Notes
April 4, 2006**

Attendees

Uta Brotherton, Arizona Department of Commerce
Don Butler, Arizona Department of Agriculture
Bill Cixish, Bureau of Land Management
Chuck Cullom, Central Arizona Project
Mark Grange, Arizona Department of Administration
Charles Ester, Salt River Project
Herb Guenther, Arizona Department of Water Resources
Lonnie Hendrix, Arizona Department of Transportation
Doug Littan, U.S.D.A. Farm Service Agency
Larry Martinez, U.S.D.A. Natural Resources Conservation Service
Nick Melcher, U.S. Geological Survey
Robert Michaels, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Alan Nulliner, U.S.D.A. Farm Service Agency
Richard Rico, Arizona Game and Fish Department
Ron Ridgway, Arizona Division of Emergency Management
Kirk Rowdabaugh, Arizona State Land Department
Marlin Scott Jr., Arizona Corporation Commission
Robert Sejkora, Arizona State Parks
Jeff Whitney, U.S. Forest Service
Deborah Young, University of Arizona Cooperative Extension
Mark Zornes, Arizona Game and Fish Department

Welcome & Introductions

Herb Guenther (Co-chair), Arizona Department of Water Resources

Ron Ridgway for Chuck McHugh (Co-chair), Arizona Division of Emergency Management

- Welcome and introductions
- Discussion on purpose of meeting - discuss drought impacts to forests, rangelands and wildlife, decide whether to maintain Drought Emergency Declaration and discuss member updates on drought response

Drought Processes

Rodney Held, Arizona Department of Water Resources

- Background information on the Drought Emergency Declaration - original declaration made in June 1999; last extension granted in December 2004
- Drought Emergency Declaration – supports a Disaster Designation which enables qualifying counties to receive federal funds for disaster relief
- At the beginning of March 2006, the Governor requested that the USDA Secretary of Agriculture give the state a Disaster Designation

Monitoring Technical Committee Update

Anton Haffer, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (representing the Monitoring Technical Committee)

- March Drought Monitor Report contains February data
- Qualitative data from LAIAG will be incorporated into data collection
- Reservoir levels - most less than 50% of 30-year average
- Groundwater level declines - currently low in snow pack and groundwater pumping continues for domestic use
- Streamflow forecasts - Colorado River at about 100%; all other watersheds less than 50% of median
- Data Tables - month depicted reflects end of the month data; drought status maps are produced by determining a percentile value using the last 30 years
- Future work - further coordination with Arizona Multi Agency Flood Task Force
- Recommendations – be “DroughtWise,” (think dry), stay current on weather outlooks

Forest Health Update

Kirk Rowdabaugh, State Forester, Arizona State Land Department

- Fire potential determined by fuels, weather, and topography
- Currently assessing fuel situation that feeds fire and availability of fire fighting resources
- Live fuel moisture content below normal; not expecting spring moisture recovery
- Moisture content of dead fuel down
- This summer dealing with 3-4 generations of bark beetles
- Expecting fires this year at low and high elevations; this is unusual -typically fires are being fought at either one elevation or another
- Monsoon – we lack pre-season indicators
- Public education is needed - 60% of Arizona fires are people caused; 40% naturally caused
- State Forestry Preparedness Plans address recovery activities; family assistance; recovery of public infrastructure; reclamation/reforestation
- 2% of the fires account for 80% of the costs
- 2006 fire season has potential to be well above normal for number of fires and acres burned
- Above normal potential for ignition and large fire development
- Potential for early season timber fires will be particularly high

Rangeland Health Update

Steve Barker, Natural Resources Conservation Service State Rangeland Management Specialist, Phoenix State Headquarters

- Results of surveys developed to assess impacts of drought from this past winter (2005 - 2006)
 - Dryland cropland - 73% average crop production loss expected on about 9,000 acres; crops affected - corn, melons, squash, small grain, fruit orchards, and pasture

- Irrigated cropland - 37% average crop production loss expected on over 52,000 acres; crops affected - chili, corn, squash, beans, cotton, small grains, alfalfa, fruit and nut orchards, and irrigated pastures
- 1/3 of ranchers are currently hauling water
- 44% of normal forage is currently available
- Colorado Plateau - some precipitation through November and small storm in February; nothing significant over 0.25 inches since October 2005 - missed early March (2006) rains
- Recommendations
 - Ranchers need a way to keep their base herds together during the drought - options include irrigated pasture, rented rangeland in other states, or feedlots
 - Affected water sources are primarily surface water, but they also include some wells
 - State and federal programs should encourage developing reliable water where forage is available, and deferring grazing where watershed protection is needed

Wildlife Update

Richard Rico and Mark Zornes, Arizona Game and Fish Department

- Wildlife are directly and indirectly impacted by drought
- Direct impacts reduce production and recruitment rates
- Habitats recover at a much slower rate than do wildlife populations
- Economically, poor habitat requires more funding and resources to manage wildlife
- Some species are more sensitive than others and populations rebound very slowly; threatened or endangered for example
- Drought tends to concentrate wildlife, making them much more susceptible to disease and predation
- Drought + Habitat Fragmentation = reduced wildlife populations and increased challenges for Wildlife Agencies
- Woolsey Peak Water Station Real-time Data Display - hooks up to water catchments, cost \$5,000 to install, collecting real-time data (water level, precipitation, temperature, relative humidity and dewpoint)
- 1996 and 2002 - hauled 1.4 million gallons of water for wildlife (a typical year = 600,000 gallons of water hauled to wildlife)
- 2006 is shaping up to be comparable to 2002

Drought Recommendation

Rodney Held, Arizona Department of Water Resources

Group members were asked, based on the information presented, whether or not the Drought Emergency Declaration should be maintained.

- Decided unanimously to make a recommendation to the Governor to maintain the Drought Emergency Declaration

- Determined that community outreach is extremely important - educating urban dwellers on the situation their rural neighbors are facing during this extended drought

Member Updates

Interagency Coordinating Group

Arizona State Parks –

As fuel costs rise, Arizona residents utilize the local state parks more frequently which could result in higher water consumption for people and landscapes

Arizona Department of Commerce –

- Provided financial assistance to local businesses after the Rodeo-Chediski fire
- No drought plan currently but will abide by what ADWR recommends
- Assisted in the Healthy Forest Tax Incentive - provides incentive for harvesting smaller timber to reduce fire potential

Natural Resources Conservation Service –

- Monitoring snowpack and providing data
- Developing streamflow forecasts with USGS
- Administers Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) - provides cost-share technical services to farmers and ranchers
- Provides a Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Coordinator to assist RC&D Councils with implementation of their area plans
- Need to get word out on drought - conduct community outreach

University of Arizona Cooperative Extension –

Recommend getting a consistent message, similar to the Governor's Task Force on Forest Health, for everyone regarding drought – talking points for community/media outreach so that all parties involved are communicating the same message to the public

Arizona Department of Administration (ADOA) –

- Provided handouts to group members regarding the annual report on water conservation efforts completed by state agencies
- State of Arizona reduced water use by 11% in response to the Governor's Executive Order 2004-28

Timeline

Susan Craig, Arizona Department of Water Resources

See [Timeline handout](#)

Next Steps

Susan Craig, Arizona Department of Water Resources

See [Next Steps handout](#)